

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5967
INFO AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
COMUSFORAZ

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 3 LINE 13)

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJ: LAJES BASE TALKS:
AZOREAN REP SAYS COUNTER-PROPOSAL BEING PREPARED

SUMMARY. THE AZOREAN REPRESENTATIVE ON THE GOP
INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT
PREPARATION OF A PORTUGUESE COUNTER-PROPOSAL IS
STILL IN PROCESS. HE CRITICIZED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S
NEGOTIATING ABILITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. PSD-LEANING LISBON DAILY "JORNAL NOVO" CARRIED
FOLLOWING INTERVIEW/ARTICLE JUNE 7 WITH REIS LEITE,
AZOREAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE ON GOP
INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR LAJES BASE TALKS.
TEXT OF ARTICLE FOLLOWS:

2. BEGIN QUOTE: THE MEETINGS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OF THE AZOREAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT
ARE GOING TO RE-COMMENCE IN LISBON, WITH A VIEW TO
WORKING OUT A DEFINITIVE PROPOSAL TO PRESENT TO THE
AMERICAN AUTHORITIES CONTAINING THE PORTUGUESE POSITION
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REGARDING THE AGREEMENT ON THE LAJES BASE.
ON BEHALF OF THE AZOREAN GOVERNMENT THE REGIONAL SECRETARY
OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, DR. REIS LEITE, HAS BEEN
PARTICIPATING IN THESE CONTACTS. THE TESTIMONY WHICH
FOLLOWS IS HIS AND IT RECORDS SOME ASPECTS OF THE
NEGOTIATING PROCESS, AND SPEAKS TO THE IMPORTANCE
WHICH THE SIGNATURE OF THIS AGREEMENT HAS FOR THE AZORES --

THE BENEFITS WHICH WILL ACCRUE ALMOST IN THEIR TOTALITY TO THE REGION. THE SIGNATURE OF THE AGREEMENT IS ENVISAGED, IT IS UNDERSTOOD, FOR THE END OF THIS MONTH OR THE BEGINNING OF JULY.

3. REIS LEITE: AS IS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, THE PRESENCE OF AMERICANS AT THE LAJES BASE HAS NEVER BROUGHT DIRECT BENEFITS TO THE REGION OF THE AZORES. POLITICAL CONDITIONS DID NOT PERMIT IN ANY WAY THAT THE AZOREANS COULD EVEN ASPIRE TO DERIVE DIRECT BENEFITS, IN ADDITION TO THOSE SUCH AS EMPLOYMENT, ETC. WHEN THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED IT HAD A PROMISE FROM THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT THAT IT WOULD PROCEED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE US FOR PAYMENT FOR THE AMERICAN PRESENCE AT THE LAJES BASE. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT UNDERSTOOD ABOVE ALL THAT, IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT, IT SHOULD NOT TAKE UPON ITSELF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE DISCUSSIONS. THUS IT DECIDED TO CONSULT WITH THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND ASK IT TO DECIDE HOW THIS MATTER, OF SUCH GREAT SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE ARCHIPELAGO, SHOULD BE CONDUCTED. IT DID SO. THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MADE ITS STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT AND DEFINED THE GUIDELINES FOR THE REGION'S INTERESTS. THESE ARE TWELVE POINTS WHICH, BY THE WAY, WERE PUBLISHED IN THE FORM OF A RESOLUTION OF THE REGIONAL

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ASSEMBLY IN THE DIARIO DA REPUBLICA.

4. JORNAL NOVO: COULD YOU GIVE A RESUME OF THESE POINTS?

5. REIS LEITE: TWO AREAS WERE POINTED OUT WHERE THE AGREEMENT SHOULD CONCENTRATE. ON THE ONE HAND, NON-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL NATURE. THE PROBLEM OF THE CIVILIAN AND PORTUGUESE WORKERS AT THE LAJES BASE -- REGULATING THEIR WORK -- HAS BEEN A MATTER OF MUCH DISCUSSION AND HAS BEEN A POINT OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE WORKERS, THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE GOVERNMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, STILL WITHIN THIS AREA OF NON-ECONOMIC INTERESTS, THE PROBLEM OF UTILIZATION OF INFRASTRUCTURES FOR NON-MILITARY AVIATION. (THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY) ALSO SPOKE OUT FAVORING EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC BENEFITS, NOTING THAT THE REGION

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WAS NOT INTERESTED IN RECEIVING MONEY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE AMERICANS, BUT RATHER IN DERIVING ADVANTAGES TO BE ABLE TO ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH WOULD SUBSEQUENTLY PERMIT THE REGION TO REACH AN EFFECTIVE DEGREE OF POSSIBLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. IT POINTED OUT AS ESSENTIAL AREAS -- TRANSPORTATION, BY MEANS OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT, PORTS AND AIRPORTS; THE ENERGY PROBLEM -- BECAUSE WE ARE CONVINCED THAT IT IS PRECISELY CHEAP AND ACCESSIBLE ENERGY FOR ALL THE ISLANDS WHICH WILL MAKE POSSIBLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, ETC., IN THE SOCIAL AREA. AS YOU SEE, THESE WERE GUIDELINES WHICH LATER IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE CONCRETE; IN THE FIRST PLACE IN AN AGREEMENT WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SO THAT WE COULD PRESENT A JOINT PROPOSAL TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT. IT WAS NECESSARY TO BRING TOGETHER THOSE WHO WERE DIRECTLY AND CONSTITUTIONALLY INTERESTED PARTIES IN THIS MATTER: THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS A WORKING GROUP WAS FORMED WHICH REALLY REPRESENTED THESE TWO ENTITIES AND THE MILITARY, BY MEANS OF AN AIR FORCE GENERAL.

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6. JORNAL NOVO: HOW HAVE THE MEETINGS BEEN GOING?

7. REIS LEITE: THESE MEETINGS HAVE PERHAPS BEEN TAKING TOO LONG. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS SAID

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS THAT IT WOULD PREFER THIS MATTER TO BE NEGOTIATED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. NOT ONLY SO AS TO ENTER EFFECTIVELY INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THAT WHICH IS AGREED UPON DOES IT HAVE TO BE RAPID, BUT ALSO IN ORDER NOT TO LOSE OPPORTUNITIES, BECAUSE WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE NEGOTATING CAPACITY OF PORTUGAL IS BEING USED UP, AND IT IS ALREADY VERY WEAK. THE PREPARATION FOR THESE NEGOTIATIONS HAS NOT BEEN EASY. ON THE ONE HAND, BECAUSE THE SUCCESSIVE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT A COMPLEX OF INTERESTS WHICH HAS BEEN CHANGING VERY RAPIDLY. THE GUIDELINES AND THE INTERESTS OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ARE NOT AT ALL IDENTICAL WITH THOSE OF THE OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. FOR SIX MONTHS, IN PRACTICAL TERMS, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE FORWARD, BECAUSE THERE WAS A POLITICAL CRISIS -- EVEN BEGUN BY THE DEPARTURE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER, DR. MEDEIROS FERREIRA -- WHICH CULMINATED IN THE FALL OF THE FIRST GOVERNMENT. IN ANY CASE THERE IS ONE POINT WHICH I SHOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE. THERE HAVE NOT BEEN BASIC DISAGREEMENTS ON THE PART OF THE THREE INTERESTED PARTIES. THE POINT OF DEPARTURE HAS BEEN THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE CIVIL, ECONOMIC BENEFITS WOULD REVERT TO THE AZORES EITHER IN THEIR TOTALITY OR ALMOST TOTALITY. THE MILITARY NEVER POSED PROBLEMS WHICH COULD MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT; QUITE THE CONTRARY AND IT WILL NOT EVEN BE THEY WHO ESTABLISH AND QUANTIFY WHAT THEIR SHARE WILL BE. AS FOR THE UNCLASSIFIED

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CIVILIAN NEGOTIATIONS, AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED, WE BELIEVE THAT THE BASIC PROBLEMS ARE, AS I MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO, THE MINIMAL PORTUGUESE NEGOTIATING CAPACITY.

8. JORNAL NOVO: CAN YOU QUANTIFY THE AMOUNT WHICH THE AMERICANS WILL PAY?

9. REIS LEITE: PORTUGAL IS NOT IN A POSITION TO NEGOTIATE WITH ANYBODY, MUCH LESS AMERICA, TO WHOM IT OWES LARGE AMOUNTS -- EVEN IF IT WERE ONLY ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE -- FOR LOANS, WHICH HAVE NOT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR IT TO DEMAND ANYTHING. ON THE PART OF THE AMERICANS, WE HAVE ALSO MET WITH GOODWILL IN CONCRETELY HELPING THE AZORES. BASED ON THIS THINKING, AND FOLLOWING THE ORIENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY, IT WAS EASY FOR THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT TO PREPARE A DRAFT PROPOSAL. THE AMERICANS THEMSELVES ALSO ADVANCED MATTERS, SHALL WE SAY, AND THEY THEMSELVES PRESENTED SOMETHING WHICH THEY ENTITLED "A PAPER" WHICH BASICALLY WAS A PAPER WITH THE

OBVIOUS SENSE OF A PROPOSAL. IT WAS TO BRING TOGETHER THAT
AMERICAN PROPOSAL WITH THOSE GUIDELINES WHICH WE
HAD PREVIOUSLY SET FORTH THAT A KING OF COMPOSITE
DOCUMENT WAS DEVELOPED. THIS WAS PRECISELY WHAT
I BROUGHT TO LISBON TWO WEEKS AGO. I HOPE THAT
IT WILL BE POSSIBLE VERY RAPIDLY TO PRESENT A
DEFINITIVE PROPOSAL TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
BASED ON THIS DOCUMENT. AS REGARDS QUANTIFICATION,
WELL THIS CANNOT BE PUBLISHED YET SINCE WE ARE IN
THE MIDST OF NEGOTIATION AND OF THE POSSIBILITIES
WHICH MAY BE NEGOTABLE. END QUOTE.
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